



The Prague Golem

Lesson Plan

1) Working with text

- Make the groups.
- Hand out the text "*Story of Golem in Prague*".
- Read the text in the class.
- Pupils mark important information.

2) Group work

- Each member of group gets own job
- Hand out worksheets
- Less gifted pupils draw comics (*Worksheet Nr. 1*)
- Normal pupils put the text to pictures (*Worksheet Nr. 1*)
- Well gifted pupils complete the gapped text and label the photos (*Worksheet Nr. 2*)

3) Check the work. Revise and summarize all information.

Optional work – The pupils can prepare the story like role play.



Golem

In Jewish folklore, a **golem** is an animated anthropomorphic being, created entirely from inanimate matter. The word was used to mean an amorphous, unformed material in Psalms and medieval writing. The most famous golem narrative involves Judah Loew ben Bezalel, the late 16th century chief rabbi of Prague.

The word *golem* is used in the Bible to refer to an embryonic or incomplete substance. Psalm 139:16 uses the word גלמי, meaning *my unshaped form*, which then passed into Yiddish as *goylem*. In modern Hebrew the word *golem* means "dumb" or "helpless". The Mishnah uses the term for an uncultivated person: "Seven characteristics are in an uncultivated person, and seven in a learned one", Pirkei Avos 5:9 in the Hebrew text (English translations vary). Similarly, golems are often used today as a metaphor for brainless lunks or entities who serve man under controlled conditions, but are hostile to him in others. Similarly, it is a Yiddish slang insult for someone who is clumsy or slow.

The earliest stories of golems date to early Judaism. In the Talmud (Tractate Sanhedrin 38b), Adam was initially created as a golem when his dust was "kneaded into a shapeless husk". Like Adam, all golems are created from mud. They were a creation of those who were very holy and close to God. A very holy person was one who strove to approach God, and in that pursuit would gain some of God's wisdom and power. One of these powers was the creation of life. However, no matter how holy a person became, a being created by that person would be but a shadow of one created by God.

Early on, it was noted that the main disability of the golem was its inability to speak. Sanhedrin 65b describes Rava creating a man (*gavra*). He sent the man to Rav Zeira. Rav Zeira spoke to him, but he did not answer. Rav Zeira said, "You were created by the magicians; return to your dust."

During the Middle Ages, passages from the Book of Creation, *Sefer Yetzirah*, were studied as a means to attain the mystical ability to create and animate a golem,



although there is little in the writings of Jewish mysticism that supports this belief. It was believed that golems could be activated by an ecstatic experience induced by the ritualistic use of various letters of the Hebrew Alphabet.

In some tales, a golem is inscribed with Hebrew words that keep it animated. The word *emet* (אמת, "truth" in the Hebrew language) written on a golem's forehead is one such example. The golem could then be deactivated by removing the aleph (א) in *emet*, thus changing the inscription from 'truth' to 'death' (*met* מת, "dead"). Legend and folklore suggest that golems could be activated by writing a specific series of letters on parchment and placing the paper in a golem's mouth.



Story of Golem in Prague



The most famous golem narrative involves Judah Loew ben Bezalel, the late 16th century chief rabbi of Prague, also known as the Maharal, who reportedly created a golem to defend the Prague ghetto from anti-Semitic attacks and pogroms. He got the name Josille.

Golem started to move by inserting of the scroll in the mouth. Golem minded the person who put the scroll in his mouth and he did given jobs. He stopped when the scroll was removed from his mouths. He had a rest after the Friday's services to keep silent hours.

One day rabbi's solitary daughter fell seriously ill. Desperate father took care of her day and night, but the illness got worse and worse. On Friday in early evening rabbi had to leave the sickbed and prepare traditional service. He forgot to remove scroll from Golem's mouth. The clay servant revived and because he didn't have any jobs, he started to destroy scarce furniture, statues and all other things in rabbi's house. The frozen maid ran to synagogue and asked the rabbi for stopping Golem. Rabbi cried out to Golem and removed scroll from his mouth. Because rabbi removed scroll in the time of Jewish feast, Golem pulverized. The sad rabbi came back to synagogue and finished the service. After the return from temple he wasn't sad any more. His daughter got well miraculously.



Worksheet Nr. 1



Worksheet Nr. 2**The story of Golem in Prague**

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